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ABSTRACT

The Community Involvement Program is a statewide community college program in Washington offering credit for community-based learning. Excerpts from several Community Involvement Program reports are presented: (1) overview of the Community Involvement Program (from the final report)--the CIP facilitated the development of a community-based learning program, developed a structure enabling students and faculty to participate in decision-making, created a mechanism for channeling college resources into the community, functioned as good public relations for the college, facilitated use of the open-door policy, and aided more efficient utilization of the tax dollar; (2) benefits of community-based learning--from "A Handbook and Recommended Guidelines for Community-Based Learning in Washington's Community Colleges"; (3) CIP guidelines (from the handbook)--pre-placement evaluation techniques, ongoing supervision and evaluation, techniques for evaluation of student performance at completion, and credit standards; and (4) project evaluation--913 students were asked via mail questionnaire about the impact of community involvement programs on their career orientation and choice, the comparison of field experience learning with classroom study, assessment of the agency involved, and the strengths and weaknesses of the CIP organizationally on campus. (KM)

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THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM:

RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

A Report of the
National Dissemination Project
for the Community Colleges

Research & Planning
Project
Washington State Board
for Community College
Education
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years there has been a growing recognition that community-based learning should be an integral part of the educational process. Colleges are under pressure to expand the horizons of their concern beyond the campus to include community activities and services and to thereby foster greater diversity of educational opportunity.

The Community Involvement Program (CIP) of the Washington State Board for Community College Education was born in this climate. Because it is of yet the only state-wide community college program offering credit for community-based learning, it has special significance for those who are seeking such change elsewhere. Basically, the program is built around three components:

1. A CIP campus team consisting of students, faculty members, administrators, and community representatives on each campus. Each CIP campus office screens and places students in off-campus learning situations, investigates credit opportunities within the college structure, and keeps track of local agencies and groups which offer fruitful learning experiences.

2. A central state-level CIP coordinating office to provide contact and communication between campuses, and compile suggested guidelines on credit standards, evaluative criteria, and learning alternatives.
3. Regular state forums in which representatives from each campus gather to discuss programming, mutual problems, and directions of the Community Involvement Program.

The program has placed up to 3,500 students in the field since its inception in the spring of 1972. In the process, as a recent CIP report points out, it has "shaped a more balanced curricular design, freed students to learn and serve in the community, and suggested viable learning options for use in the coming decade." In the 1973-74 academic year, state-level coordination is being dropped, however local CIP's are to continue, and periodic state-wide meetings should provide needed coordination.

What follows are exerpts from several Community Involvement Program reports produced by Tom Hulst and Kathie Werner of the state coordinating staff: "Final Report of the Community Involvement Program" (June 30,1973), and "A Handbook and Recommended Guidelines for Community-Based Learning in Washington's Community Colleges" (January 11, 1973). They cover the structure and functioning of

the project, the benefits of community-based learning, general CIP guidelines, and the project evaluation carried out in spring, 1973.

It is hoped that this overview of one major effort to recognize community-based learning as part of the overall educational process will both kindle interest and suggest possibilities. The National Dissemination Project will continue to support innovative community college program efforts. For further information contact:

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OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM*

.....The Community Involvement Program became a systemwide project by February 1973, with all twenty-two community college districts in the state participating. The program attempted to effect a qualitative change in community college education in the state of Washington. It proposed a more balanced curricular design, freed students to learn and serve in the community, and suggested viable learning options for use in the coming decade.

There were a number of justifications for introducing the Community Involvement Program into the community college system. As noted, the primary intent of the CIP was to facilitate the development of a community-based learning program for students. Curricula were to be improved with the addition of laboratory training in supervised off-campus experiences. Quantitatively, the goal of the project was to place more than 5,900 students in off-campus learning positions.

A second purpose of the CIP was to develop a structure that would enable students and faculty to participate in college decision-making. In 1972-73 over 75 students participated in Community Involvement Program Forums and staffs at the state and local level. Along

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* From "Final Report of the Community Involvement Program."

with faculty members and administrators students discussed the guidelines for community-based learning that were later reviewed by instructional councils on campus and the Washington State Board for Community College Education. They gained administrative experience through the day-to-day management of campus centers. They became knowledgeable about the governance of community colleges and gained understanding of a whole range of activities of community agencies and governmental entities. Through reports, newspapers, conferences and seminars, faculty and students particpated in the shaping of alternative educational modes.

The CIP also created a mechanism whereby college resources could be more easily channeled into the community. In most cases, off-campus learning positions were service-oriented. Students engaged in many "service-learning" activities such as tutoring disadvantaged elementary pupils, conducting art courses for handicapped children, and assisting residents in mental institutions. They served as loaned executives in the National Alliance of Businessmen program, participated in the "Meals on Wheels Program," and worked with ex-offenders in the Resident Release Program.

The work of the local CIP staff coupled with student efforts in the community also presented the community college in a visible, positive manner to its diverse client group. The program, in effect, fulfilled a public relations

function for the college. The indifference that may exist between campus and community could be at least partially ameliorated by student field work in the community.

It is a goal and a policy of Washington's community colleges to maintain the "open door." But, without programs for recruitment and improved curricula, many of those in the "periphery" of the learning force will not heed the open door. The CIP was, in particular, an attempt to respond with innovative educational techniques to the aspirations of populations heretofore not served by higher education. The veteran, ethnic minorities, ex-offenders, returning women desire education programs that promote their personal growth while providing them with the skills and knowledge closely linked to available employment opportunities. In short, community-based learning is a key element in ensuring the success of the comprehensive open door community college.

It was a purpose of the project, finally, to bring about more efficient utilization of the educational tax dollar. It is probably true that educational costs--especially capital costs--may be lowered as community and college resources are shared. But, often left out of the cost/benefit equation are the long-range economies accruing to society when education is improved and the level of education rises; both in the short run and the long run sense, society could benefit from an allocation

of funds that maximizes the educational potential of cooperative efforts between colleges and communities.

The purposes mentioned may seem to conflict. The quest for educational economies is not often associated with a desire for increased services to disadvantaged and improved instruction. However, educators have sought solutions to the declining educational dollar assuming the educational system is a "closed system." It is little wonder their worries mount as enrollments and funds decline. The purposes of the CIP were not in conflict (in theory or practice) when one recognizes both the economies and the enrichment that can result from college and community cooperation.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING*

Benefits to the Student

1. Learns to face and define problems.
2. Develops initiative and independent reasoning.
3. Understands the relation of theory to practice.
4. Prepares to make future career choices.
5. Gains exposure to cultural and class differences.
6. Assumes responsibility for actions.
7. Provides needed services to the surrounding community.
8. Becomes critical observer of work and environment.

Benefits to the College

1. Supplies a learning laboratory beyond the ability of the college to provide.
2. Enables the college to provide optimum service to the community on a more individualized basis.
3. Provides opportunity for the college to check relevance of training with actual job situations.
4. Adds experienced evaluation from the community to the school's assessment of the student.
5. Facilitates learning for the large clientele of the community college who were alienated by the traditional classroom structure.

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*From "A Handbook and Recommended Guidelines for Community-Based Learning in Washington's Community Colleges."

6. Demonstrates how the resources of the college are used to develop student potential.
7. Reorients educative process to human concerns.
8. Improves college-community relations.

Benefits to the Community

1. Enables the community to train workers who will fit more easily into the job structure after leaving school.
2. Increases the possibility that students will be made aware of community needs rather than mere economic opportunity when making their career choices.
3. Provides the opportunity to gain fresh approaches to problem-solving.
4. Underscores the accessibility of the college to the community by involving the community as classroom and laboratory.
5. Improves community-college relations.

CIP GUIDELINES*

Pre-Placement Evaluation Techniques

1. Student placement based on career objectives is desirable.
2. Prior to a student's placement he/she should meet the pre-requisites established by each department or obtain permission of a faculty advisor.
3. The agency has the final say in who will be selected to work.
4. Any changes in the learning contract must be approved both by the student and the faculty memeber he is working with.
5. A student may receive both credit and pay for relevant educational experiences that meet the other program guidelines.

Ongoing Supervision and Evaluation

6. There should be an active representative advisory committee for experiential learning.
7. There should be written agreement between the community college and the involved agency.
8. The instructor-sponsor should meet with the student(s) in conferences or in seminars at mutually agreed upon times.

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* From "A Handbook and Recommended Guidelines for Community-Based Learning in Washington's Community Colleges."

9. Efforts should be made to utilize adjunct faculty. ("adjunct faculty" refers to resource persons.)
10. Seminars-in-the-field should be encouraged.
11. There should be numerous student-faculty meetings throughout the project.
12. Special training and workshops for faculty are encouraged.
13. Instructor-sponsor supervision is mandatory for credit award.

Techniques for Evaluation of Student Performance at the Completion of the Experience.

14. The grade received by each student is determined by the evaluation of the agency supervisor, the student, and the record and evaluation kept by the instructor-sponsor.
15. The student will document his learning experience as determined in a contract.
16. Grading procedures will be determined in a contract.
17. Evaluation should include a written documentation, whether written by the student (as a final paper) or by the faculty member (as an evaluation of discussion with the student) or by the community agency (as a report of the student's progress). Ideally, all three of these would be included.

Credit Standards

18. A student intending to transfer may take no more than one-third of his total credits through community-based learning courses.

19. The suggested credit standard is that the student should work a minimum of 20 clock hours per quarter per credit.

PROJECT EVALUATION

During Spring quarter, 1973, the State Coordinator's office in conjuction with the University of Washington's Department of Institutional Educational Research, Seattle University's School of Education, and the Social Science Division of Seattle Central Community College began the task of overall project evaluation.

Project evaluation was pursued by dividing the task into three components. In the first component, a random sample of 15 Seattle Community College students was selected. The students responded to some in-depth interviews about their Community Involvement Program experience. The design of the second component was developed to measure and compare the cognitive learning acquired by two groups of students. Students in Group A participated in field study accompanied by a loose seminar with little course content. Students in Group B enrolled in field experience and a seminar with more highly organized and developed course materials.

The third component was designed to survey student attitudes throughout the state concerning their community-based learning experience. The team developed the instrument (i.e., the questionnaire) for this component in four phases as follows:

Phase I - Using a nonstructured survey instrument (completely open-ended), a random sample of fifteen (15) former CIP students were asked to respond in essay form to questions suggested by students, CIP staff members, and project consultants. A tape recorded orientation to the questions was presented to the students along with a written list of the questions. Responses were categorized with trends identified.

Phase II - After reviewing trends and categories of responses from instrument #1, a second semi-structured instrument was developed which listed optional responses. In addition, space for open-ended responses was available. This instrument was sent to a second random sample of twenty (20) former CIP students for responses, and also was sent to CIP staff across the state for their suggestions as to how to make the instrument as relevant as possible to their respective campus situations.

Phase III - After reviewing trends and response categories from instrument #2, a structured instrument was developed (instrument #3). This instrument was presented to ten (10) former CIP students in a series of in-depth individual interviews. Responses were studied in order to determine question ambiguities or lack of relevance.

Phase IV - After adjusting instrument #3 in accordance with the responses obtained during the series of in-depth individual interviews, a fourth (instrument #4) was developed and sent to a sample of former CIP students across the system.

.....In late May, 1973, the final version of the questionnaire, Phase IV, was mailed to 913 students from sixteen community colleges in the state. The students in each case were enrolled in courses in which either full or partial requirements were satisfied through field study in the community. By June 18, 273 students had returned their questionnaire to the State Coordinator's Office.

From the total returned questionnaires, the following demographic information was recorded:

AGE IN YEARS

Ages:	18-22	23-30	30-40	40 & over
Percent	61.80%	10.17%	10.30%	7.73%

MARITAL STATUS

Category:	Single	Married	Divorced	Separated
Percent	63.38%	26.29%	7.98%	2.35%

SEX

Category:	Male	Female
Percent	35.78%	64.22%

.....Respondents were asked questions in four broad areas that pertained to the Community Involvement Program or community-based learning: (1) The impact of community involvement programs on their career orientation and choice; (2) the comparison of field experience learning with classroom study; (3) student assessment of the agency in which the community-based learning experience occurred; (4) and the strengths and weaknesses of the Community Involvement Program organizationally on campus.

I. When students were asked what career assistance the Community Involvement Program provided them, they responded as follows:

	Number of Respondents	Yes %	No %	Not Certain %	Doesn't Apply %
a. helped me to make a decision on my career ambitions	247	59.9	17.4	12.2	10.5
b. helped me in deciding against certain careers	247	36.0	38.5	9.7	15.8

	Number of Respondents	Yes %	No %	Not Certain %	Doesn't Apply %
c. helped me to identify my strengths and weaknesses as they pertain to my career goals	254	74.8	8.7	7.1	9.4
d. helped me to integrate my classroom learning with the practical needs of my prospective career	251	59.8	17.9	6.8	15.5
e. helped motivate me to improve upon my job-related skills	251	53.0	17.5	7.6	21.9
f. helped me to increase my self-confidence about my ability to satisfactorily perform career-related duties	253	76.7	9.9	5.2	8.3
g. helped me develop problem-solving techniques	244	62.3	19.7	9.4	9.1
h. helped me in relating more positively to the people I worked with	244	73.0	11.1	5.7	10.2

Ten percent said that the experience helped them either directly or indirectly to obtain employment.

From the brief results recounted here it would appear that students felt strongly that their experience in community-based learning served them well in orienting them to potential careers.

The fact that they learned problem-solving techniques (62.3% said Yes), were motivated to improve job-related skills (53% said Yes), and related more positively to people they worked with (72.95% said Yes) suggests also that students acquired some skills which would aid them in future employment.

II. Students were asked to compare their community-based learning experience to the classroom experience.

	Number of Respondents	Yes	No	Not Certain
a. the theories presented in the classroom were of more value to me than were the experiences of CIP	248	10.1	70.6	19.4
b. I felt the need for more traditional classroom type "activities"	245	10.6	80.4	9.0
c. the CIP experience helped me realize that I needed more traditional classroom instruction	246	24.8	62.6	12.6
d. helped me to better understand what I had learned in the traditional classroom	248	73.3	17.7	8.9
e. the facts and theories presented in the traditional classroom provided me with an adequate background for my CIP experience	258	51.6	33.	15.6

This set of questions clearly suggests that students felt that the off-campus learning experience was valuable to them educationally. However, more analysis is needed before a valid interpretation can be given to these responses.

By their overwhelming selection of No in questions a., b., and c., students may be reacting negatively as much to bad classroom teaching as they are, positively, to the field experience. They may be reflecting the mood of the times--

namely that liberal arts graduates are finding it difficult to obtain employment--and thus against traditional higher education instruction.

Whatever may be the reason(s) for findings such as these, those in charge of instruction on campus cannot and dare not take these responses lightly.

III. Students were asked to respond to statements about the agency in which they learned/worked/served.

	Number of Respondents	All of the time %	Most of the time %	Some of the time %	Never %
a. the personnel of the agency(s) provided me with assistance in achieving my goals	242	49.2	26.9	18.2	5.8
b. the agency(s) saw me as a laborer and not as a student attempting to accomplish learning via experience	238	17.2	14.3	15.1	53.4
c. the personnel of the agency(s) understood what I was attempting to learn	238	50.8	26.5	14.7	8.0
d. the agency(s) I was placed with was (were) the right placement(s) for what I wanted to learn	238	64.7	16.4	11.8	7.1

The responses to this set of questions suggests that students were generally satisfied that agency personnel lived up to their part of the bargain in the learning contract.

Over 64% stated that the agency was the right placement for what they wanted to learn all of the time.

The other significant finding in this series of questions is that agencies apparently recognized that students had a unique role to fulfill in the agency--they were not viewed as typical employees and were not given mere menial tasks to perform. Though question B may have contained some ambiguity for respondents, 53.36% indicated that they were never regarded as a laborer by the agency.

.....A final question was asked of the respondents--"Would you encourage your friends to participate in the Community Involvement Program?" The response was as follows:

a. Yes, definitely.....68.59%

b. Yes, probably.....24.19%

c. I don't know.....4.33%

d. Probably not.....1.08%

e. Definite not.....1.80%

If a. and b. are combined, nearly 93% said yes they would encourage their friends to participate in the Community Involvement Program.

Students were provided the opportunity to respond to an open-ended question which asked for the arguments they

would give for program continuation if the Community Involvement Program faced cancellation. A brief summary of those arguments are stated here:

1. The Community Involvement Program provides learning experiences for students and also benefits the community.

2. The outside classroom experience is very rewarding in learning new methods and concepts for a future career.

3. The Community Involvement Program is an excellent source in helping to find that certain type of experience that a student needs and wants.

4. I really think my experience with CIP was interesting and was more valuable than anything else I've ever taken on.

5. The Community Involvement Program is important because it gives the student a chance to find out through a learning experience whether or not he is suited for a particular career.

6. The Community Involvement Program experience is more valuable than classroom lecture.

7. The work is a practical application of classroom material.

8. It helped me to establish a higher sense of responsibility.

9. Face to face contact with clients or the public can never truly be accomplished in the classroom.

The notions embodied in the above statements reappeared time and time again on the returned questionnaires.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

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